

Building Projects that Build Communities

BRIEFING PAPER

Prepared for the
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PURPOSE:

Provide an overview of the agency's initiatives with local partners to uniformly develop more collaborative, community, and environmentally sensitive project development approaches including the Context Sensitive Solutions Executive Order and new tools such as the *Building Projects that Build Communities* guidebook, *Understanding Flexibility in Transportation Design – Washington*, and the Urban Funding Matrix for State (WSDOT) Capital Projects .

ACTION/OUTCOME:

This is an informational item and no action is required of the Commission.

BACKGROUND:

Communities across the nation have been embracing “livable” or “vibrant communities”. Within Washington, we have seen a greater recognition of the importance for community involvement in transportation planning as it impacts the livability and future economic vitality of the community. Many areas across the states are re-evaluating their own vision, priorities, and goals.

Over the past several years, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has been placing a greater emphasis on a balanced approach in developing projects that includes safety, mobility, environmental, and aesthetics. One of the Vital Few strategies for FHWA is to provide guidance, information, and training to States on "integrating the planning and environmental processes" and encouraging context-sensitive solutions/context-sensitive design (CSS/CSD).

With this in mind, WSDOT has initiated a number of efforts to facilitate transportation development that takes into consideration several factors on all projects. Particular emphasis has been focused toward improving working relationships with communities in an effort to meet community visions while still meeting environmental, aesthetic, mobility, and safety needs. This is evident in a variety of projects where WSDOT has partnered with a local government.

WSDOT is continuing to develop communications and training tools that will assist both WSDOT and communities. These include, but are not limited to, developing an executive policy order; new design guidance, web tools on both Design and Highways & Local Program web pages; the hosting of a regional conference, numerous professional meeting presentations, and training of both WSDOT and community participants.

In addition, WSDOT is leading various research projects aimed at providing aesthetic solutions while still meeting safety needs and ensuring that solutions have a reasonable probability for success prior to their installation.

DISCUSSION:

Information is provided to enable Commissioners to learn more about partnership and design efforts with both urban and rural communities.

RECOMMENDATION:

N/A.

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